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ABSTRACT

The North Texas State University's Women's Center was designed to define and identify the needs of women in the NTSU Community and to encourage and facilitate institutional and community response to those perceived needs. David T. Borland, consultant, advised the organizing group about the clientele who were to be served, the available resources for the center, and the scope of activities of the organization. His recommendations concern the goals of the organization not only as they relate to substance or services but as they relate to maintenance of the system. The recommendations deal with the organization and administration of a womens center: its basic purpose, immediate and long-range goals, the staff, the accountability. (JMF)

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ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GOALS:
A CONSULTANT'S VIEW OF WOMEN'S CENTERS

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Organizational Development and Goals: A Consultant's View of Women's Centers

My purpose here is to present the views of a consultant/advisor who was brought into this effort to provide an external evaluation of the proposed organization. I was asked to provide this service by the woman who at that time had the operational responsibility of organizing the Women's Center. At the time I joined the group, three (3) organizational documents had been created: 1) Women's Center flow chart, 2) responsibilities, 3) initial objectives. A Woman's Center Organizational Committee was the place I was specifically asked to work. The situation as Barb has described it and represented by these three (3) documents raised concerns in my mind - evaluating it from an organizational/management point of view. Without getting into the specifics of the Center, which Margot will, the larger concerns which we felt had to be answered first were: 1) clientele - who was to be served by the Center? Students, faculty, professional staff, support staff, spouses, community members, men, the University, various women's groups. 2) resources - limited financial resources, poor physical location (Men's Building), people were our major resource. The conflict was one of how do we serve an efficient and limited number of clientele but recruit the number of people needed who were the primary resource, a political solution? 3) scope of activities - this presented the conflict. More clearly, do we serve a narrow range of activities well or do we serve as many needs as expressed by the needs assessment and risk spreading our major resource too thinly? If you will recall the list of thirteen (13) objectives that were constructed originally, they included the following functions: referral - information (library); investigative, e.g., affirmative action violations; research needs; programming or educational; recruiting of students and candidates; and counseling. As I mentioned earlier, a political (not partisan, but priority) decision was needed and debated vigorously. Although resources were limited, the institution did provide recognition, facilities, support services, and legitimacy. On the other hand many felt that this provided restrictions, both in scope and

intensity of operations, that were morally intolerable. The classic conflict between idealism and pragmatism! Further, the answer would have significant implications for recruitment of personnel and credibility with those to be served, i.e., the future of the Center itself.

The resolution was a difficult one and was resolved in relation to the fourth concern I had - goals. The most important item to me in the list of goals that had been established was that they all related to substance or services of the Center and none related to maintenance of the system. Every organization needs to devote some of its resources and efforts to its goals.

The second concern I had with the goals statement was that there was no priority, long term vs. short term, in allocating resources to their accomplishment. This was a reflection of the problem I mentioned earlier regarding clientele and trying to serve everyone.

There also was no timetable for their accomplishment nor a system of evaluating progress or lack of it in meeting these goals. This third problem was especially significant in relation to the current trend of accountability in higher education generally and in the field of student development specifically. For a new subsystem, such as a Women's Center, an institution will require more vigorous evaluation, even though the resources they allocate often are minimal.

Operations - the final problem area that concerned me as an organizational consultant was that of authority. There was some confusion as to its organizational status. The Center was a service or extension of the Dean of Students' Office and therefore, a very definite authority line existed with the institution.

Authority within the Center was somewhat confused with the structure that had existed. The large (fifteen (15) member) advisory board was cumbersome, difficult to call together, and with the established goals - tended to move into an operational function, rather than a policy-setting function. This often can lead to problems of responsibility for the administration of the system.

RECOMMENDED ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

To resolve these concerns, the Women's Center was established along two (2) parameters - organizational guidelines and operational guidelines.

The North Texas State University's Women's Center is a structure designed to provide needed services for the North Texas State University Community, especially in the area of women's concerns. The Center is created with the idea that it will represent an organizational base, open to members of the university community (students, staff, spouses, and alumni), which will make it possible to increase institutional responsiveness to individuals by providing a more effective means of communicating their needs.

The basic purposes of the Women's Center are twofold: to define and identify the needs of women in the NTSU Community, and to encourage and facilitate institutional and community response to those perceived needs. These responses may be seen to exist in such areas as education and program, counseling and referral, facilitation or organizational maintenance. The range of such responses will be determined by the assessed needs and resources of the campus and community.

The Women's Center has been initiated as a service of and an adjunct to the Office of the Dean of Students of North Texas State University. Under its present organization, the Center is dependent upon the University for financial and advisory support. An Advisory Board, composed of representatives of all segments of the university community, will provide direction for the Center.

Administrative functions of the Center will be carried out by the Coordinator of the Women's Center under the direction of the Dean of Students' Office.

GOALS

Immediate - construct a needs assessment instrument; contact University library; referral handbook, fall registration; publicity document; establish operating principles; improve physical location; contingency plans.

Intermediate - Administer the needs assessment; recommend program goals; Women's
Emphasis Week - liaison with women's groups; liaison with major
campus subsystems; develop volunteer staff; expand referral handbook.
Long range - Program development; personnel recruitment and recognition; P.R. plans;
extension of services to community.

ADMINISTRATION

- Staff:
1. Administration representation + institutional coordinator
 2. Advisory Board - establish long-term goals and accountability
 3. Board of Directors - consult on short-term goals
 4. Coordinator/Director - administer the system
 5. Support staff - assist in delivery of system goals
 6. Committees - to carry out service goals

Accountability - Appointment; length of term; replacement; evaluation; remuneration

The specifics of the system are what Margot will present for the remainder of the formal part of the program. Specifics about what I have presented have been reserved for your questions, in order to tailor those details to your specific campus situations.

Two (2) specific things that Margot and Board asked me to mention were: specific suggestions of organizational parameters, which I call Organizational Action Process: goals; objectives; analysis; strategies; tactics.

Secondly, it was thought that my view, as a male working with women to organize for their needs, might provide some helpful insights. One definite bias I have and I believe was shared by the organizers of this Women's Center was that to be effective and mature, the Center would have to enlist and encourage the support of men. This point is controversial and needs to be handled carefully but it seems to me that to provide opportunities for women to grow, to assert themselves; i.e., to change their roles, the consequent positive and negative effects on the roles of men, for example, married men and their changing wives' roles, is a legitimate and mandatory topic for Women's Center programming and operations. An example of this need was evident in

my appointment to the organizational committee. While a woman was probably more desirable for the system at that time, expertise was needed. In gathering expertise at the initial stages of development, especially if the major resource is people, discrimination is counter-productive. I must admit, even though I felt welcomed, I did feel some resentment - not personally, but in relation to my ideas. Or in relation to my idea of using the Men's Building as reverse publicity. It was more that "He really doesn't understand" where the motivation for me was to turn an apparent disadvantage into a real advantage. A few times the vote on my suggestions came out as 7-0 against. This was followed immediately by much communication toward me to "convince me" of their position which I took as a group attempt to let me know that it was not a personal rejection. Adjustments need to be made on both views of the situation, which is political.